Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Project
Quarterly Performance Report
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AO	Agreement Officer
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CO	Contracting Officer
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
CRP	Community Resilience Program
DO	Development Objective
DQA	Data Quality Assessment
EGRP	Early Grade Reading Program
FY	Fiscal Year
GIS	Geographic Information System
H4L	Health for Life
IGP	Integrated Governance Project
IMET	Integrated M&E Team
IP	Implementing Partner
IR	Intermediate Result
KISAN	Knowledge-based Integrated Sustainable Agriculture and Nutrition
KM	Knowledge Management
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
PMP	Performance Management Plan
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) project is to support the achievement of USAID/Nepal's Country Development Cooperation Strategy Development Objectives (DOs) by assisting the mission in planning, designing, conducting, disseminating, and learning from more rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of development activities. This includes designing and implementing both quantitative and qualitative evaluations and assessments as well as providing expert analysis and technical assistance to USAID/Nepal's programs.

The MEL project met all of its deliverables due during the first quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2016, with the exception of the first M&E course module planned for delivery in December 2015, which was delayed by USAID until the following quarter for scheduling convenience. Major products delivered to the mission during the quarter included two assessments and a comprehensive performance data analysis completed under Component 1; a mid-term evaluation completed under Component 2; and an assessment completed under Component 3.

Unrest in the Terai region, and the fuel crisis that it has entailed since the beginning of the quarter, impeded the mobility of mission staff and consequently affected the ability of the MEL project to support data quality assessments and other routine field visits outside Kathmandu. Nonetheless, the MEL project was able not only to adhere to its first annual work plan during the quarter, but also to respond positively to the mission's request to deliver a major product not previewed in that work plan—a mid-term evaluation of a Feed the Future activity that required extensive field work.

Highlights of activities performed during the quarter, by component, are as follows:

Component 1. Under the guidance of the responsible Agreement and Contracting Officer's Representatives, MEL project staff continued performing ongoing tasks and subtasks, such as reviews of activity M&E plans. Two deliverables, the Assessment of Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Building Needs with Recommended Training Plan for USAID and Implementing Partners and the Annual Performance Data Analysis Report — FY 2015, were delivered to and accepted by the mission.

Presentations of the findings and conclusions from the latter report were made to each of the mission's DO teams in preparation for their annual performance reviews. An additional deliverable, an Assessment of the Use of GIS by USAID/Nepal and its Partners, was submitted to the mission for review and comment. The team also developed the draft of a deliverable, the Assessment of Monitoring & Evaluation Processes and Capacity of Implementing Partners of USAID Nepal, scheduled for transmission to the mission in early January 2016. The first M&E course module of the training plan, scheduled for delivery to mission and implementing partner staff in early December, was delayed by USAID until the following quarter for scheduling convenience.

Component 2. During the reporting period, the MEL project carried out a mid-term performance evaluation of USAID/Nepal's Knowledge-based Integrated Sustainable Agriculture and Nutrition (KISAN) project and submitted a draft report to the mission for review and comment. Although this evaluation was not in the MEL project's year one work plan and was undertaken in the midst of the fuel crisis, it was mobilized rapidly and carried out in six program districts with no impediment to the project's ability to meet its scheduled deliverables.

Preparatory work was also completed for two other studies: a mid-term performance evaluation of the Health for Life (H4L) core activity and a desk study of potential research topics relating to governance and economic development outcomes in Nepal for the DO1 team. The MEL technical team supported the mission in developing the scopes of work for both studies and subsequently developed work orders to respond to them, with the objective of kicking off the studies in January 2016. Work also continued on developing evaluation questions and methodologies for impact and performance evaluations of the mission's Early Grade Reading program.

Component 3. During the first quarter of FY 2016, the MEL project completed and forwarded to the mission a Knowledge Management Assessment: Organizational Learning and Information Technologies, for review and comment. In addition, following up on the Resilience Measurement Workshops it organized and facilitated in September 2015, the MEL project gave a presentation to the mission on workshop findings and recommendations and submitted a discussion draft on incorporation of resilience indices into the mission's performance management plan.

INTRODUCTION

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) project supports the achievement of USAID/Nepal's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) Development Objectives (DOs) by assisting the mission in planning, designing, conducting, disseminating, and learning from more rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of development activities. This includes designing and implementing both quantitative and qualitative evaluations and assessments as well as providing expert analysis and technical assistance to USAID/Nepal's programs. The project is also responsible for providing M&E capacity building support to both USAID and implementing partner (IP) staff, and for support to the mission in measuring the effectiveness of its efforts to promote gender equality and inclusion of persons with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals; and historically disadvantaged caste and ethnic groups.

As a learning project, MEL is committed to cooperating, learning, and adapting its approach in such as manner so as to respond rapidly and effectively to evolving mission needs and requirements for more rigorous (M&E) of its activities. Beginning with this quarterly report, this process will be reflected by quarterly revisions to the MEL project's annual work plan to incorporate additional tasks, subtasks and deliverables falling within the scope of the MEL contract that have been requested by the project's Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) and accepted for implementation by CAMRIS International. To the extent that the MEL project has been requested to either postpone or delete scheduled deliverables from the MEL contract, these deliverables will also be noted in each quarterly report, with concomitant requests for contract amendments to reflect the postponements or deletions.

The MEL project has three components as outlined below:

Component 1: Support greater rigor and coherence in USAID/Nepal's M&E efforts

- Provide technical assistance for the performance management plan (PMP) and project- and activity-level M&E plans.
- Strengthen the capacity of USAID/Nepal staff to conduct M&E tasks and use data effectively.
- Strengthen the performance monitoring capacity of USAID/Nepal implementing partners.

Component 2: Design and conduct analyses, evaluations, surveys, studies, and assessments

- Conduct performance and impact evaluations.
- Conduct surveys, studies, assessments, and analyses.

Component 3: Support improved knowledge management within the mission

- Assist the mission to improve its knowledge management (KM) practices, including use of AIDTracker Plus or other USAID performance monitoring or KM systems.

QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE

Progress toward achievement of purpose

The MEL project met all of its deliverables due during the first quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2016, with the exception of the first M&E course module planned for delivery in December 2015, which was delayed by USAID until the following quarter for scheduling convenience. Major products delivered to the mission during the quarter included two assessments and a comprehensive performance data analysis completed under Component 1; a mid-term evaluation completed under Component 2; and an assessment completed under Component 3.

Unrest in the Terai region, and the fuel crisis that it has entailed since the beginning of the quarter, impeded the mobility of mission staff and consequently affected the ability of the MEL project to support data quality assessments (DQAs) and other routine field visits outside Kathmandu. Nonetheless, in general the MEL project was able not only to adhere to its first annual work plan during the quarter, but also to respond positively to the mission's request to deliver a major product not previewed in that work plan—a mid-term evaluation of a Feed the Future activity that required extensive field work. This evaluation, although undertaken in the midst of the fuel crisis, was mobilized rapidly and carried out in six program districts with no impediment to the project's ability to meet its scheduled deliverables.

Progress toward completion of outputs and deliverables

This quarter marked the scaling up of most of the activities that were initiated in the final quarter of FY 2015, with initiation of new tasks and subtasks in all components. Progress within each of the three components is summarized below:

Component 1. Under the guidance of the responsible Agreement and Contracting Officer's Representatives (AOR/CORs), MEL project staff continued performing ongoing tasks and subtasks, such as reviews of several activity M&E plans. Two deliverables, the Assessment of Monitoring & Evaluation Capacity Building Needs with Recommended Training Plan for USAID and Implementing Partners and the Annual Performance Data Analysis Report—FY 2015, were delivered to and accepted by the mission. Presentations of the findings and conclusions from the latter report were made to each of the mission's DO teams in preparation for their annual performance reviews.

An additional deliverable, an Assessment of the Use of GIS by USAID/Nepal and its Partners, was submitted to the mission for review and comment. The team also developed the draft of a deliverable, the Assessment of Monitoring and Evaluation Processes and Capacity of Implementing Partners of USAID Nepal, scheduled for transmission to the mission in early January 2016. The first M&E course module of the

training plan, scheduled for delivery in early December, was delayed by USAID until the following quarter for scheduling convenience.

Component 2. During the reporting period, the MEL project carried out a mid-term performance evaluation of USAID/Nepal's Knowledge-based Integrated Sustainable Agriculture and Nutrition (KISAN) activity and submitted a draft report to the mission for review and comment. Preparatory work was also completed for two other studies: a mid-term performance evaluation of the Health for Life (H4L) core activity and a desk study of potential research topics relating to governance and economic development outcomes in Nepal for the DO1 team. The MEL technical team supported the mission in development of the scopes of work for both studies and subsequently developed work orders to respond to them, with the objective of kicking off the studies in January 2016. Work also continued on developing evaluation questions and methodologies for impact and performance evaluations of the mission's Early Grade Reading Program (EGRP).

Component 3. During the first quarter of FY 2016, the MEL project completed and forwarded to the mission a Knowledge Management Assessment: Organizational Learning and Information Technologies, for review and comment. In addition, following up on the Resilience Measurement Workshops it organized and facilitated in September 2015, the MEL project gave a presentation to the mission on workshop findings and recommendations and submitted a discussion draft on incorporation of resilience indices into the mission's PMP.

Progress of indicators against targets

The following matrix illustrates the progress made against achievement of targets by each quarter, and cumulative as of December 2015, for each of the indicators in the M&E plan.[1]

Result	Indicator Type	Verification/ Data Source	Year 1 Targets	Achievement Until Last Quarter	This Quarter Achievement (Oct to Dec)	Achievements as of This Quarter (Dec 2015)	Status Report
Objective: Knowledge dissemination and learning support strong planning, designing and implementation							
Extent to which USAID/Nepal program exhibits strong planning, designing and implementation based on MEL project interventions	Outcome	Mid-term and end-of-project evaluations	-	-	-	-	The project intends to carry out both mid-term and end-of-project performance evaluations to address the extent to which this objective has been met.
Intermediate Result (IR) 1: USAID achieves rigorous and coherent performance monitoring							
1-1: Percent of USAID/Nepal program staff using data for programmatic improvements (cumulative)	Outcome	MEL Annual Survey	Baseline	41 percent (N=22)	-	41 percent	Baseline on this indicator has been established in last quarter through MEL Annual Survey. 41 percent program staff have been using data for programmatic improvements. This figure is considered as baseline data to compare with achievements of consequent years.

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[1] Some indicators have been added reflecting additions to the MEL Annual Survey to cross-check awareness of reported results.

Result	Indicator Type	Verification/ Data Source	Year 1 Targets	Achievement Until Last Quarter	This Quarter Achievement (Oct to Dec)	Achievements as of This Quarter (Dec 2015)	Status Report
1-2: Percent of USAID technical staff who know how to select quality performance indicators (cumulative)	Outcome	MEL Annual Survey	Baseline	27 percent (N=22)	-	27 percent	27 percent of the USAID technical staff know how to select quality performance indicators.
1-3: Percent of USAID technical staff who know how to establish realistic performance targets (cumulative)	Outcome	MEL Annual Survey	Baseline	9 percent (N=22)	-	9 percent	9 percent of USAID technical staff are familiar with establishing realistic performance targets.
Sub IR 1.1: PMP, project M&E plans and activity M&E plans updated							
1.1-1: Number of PMP and project M&E plans reviewed (annual)	Output	Project Monitoring System	1	1	-	1	Mission PMP reviewed by MEL team.
1.1-2: Number of activity M&E plans reviewed (annual)	Output	Project Monitoring System	7	5	1	6	The MEL technical team has reviewed six activity M&E plans so far: Sajhedari Bikas, EGRP, KISAN, H4L, Suaahara and Baliyo Ghar.
Sub IR 1.2: USAID and partner personnel able to perform all M&E responsibilities							
1.2-1: Number of participants from USAID/Nepal program staff who complete 16 hours of M&E training as	Output	Project Monitoring System	15	0	0	0	The training has been planned for February 2016 onwards.

Result	Indicator Type	Verification/ Data Source	Year 1 Targets	Achievement Until Last Quarter	This Quarter Achievement (Oct to Dec)	Achievements as of This Quarter (Dec 2015)	Status Report
per capacity building plans							
1.2-2: Number of participants from IP program staff who complete 16 hours of M&E training as per capacity building plans (annual)	Output	Project Monitoring System	15	0	0	0	The training has been planned for February 2016 onwards.
Sub IR 1.3: USAID IPs meet M&E responsibilities							
1.3-1: Number of regularly scheduled DQAs completed with support of MEL project[2]	Output	Project Monitoring System	11	0	3	3	The MEL technical team assisted mission in conducting DQA of Hariyo Ban program. The DQA was done for three selected indicators.
IR 2: Production of rigorous evaluations, studies, and assessments							
2-1: Percent of recommendations from evaluations completed within the past year that	Outcome	MEL Annual Survey	Baseline	18 percent (N=22)	-	18 percent	18 percent of respondents said that 50 percent or more of the recommendations of all

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[2] One indicator considered as one DQA. There are 83 Performance Plan and Report indicators noted in PMP that needs to have DQA by 2019 (PMP period).

Result	Indicator Type	Verification/ Data Source	Year 1 Targets	Achievement Until Last Quarter	This Quarter Achievement (Oct to Dec)	Achievements as of This Quarter (Dec 2015)	Status Report
have been applied (measured 6 months after completion of those evaluations)[3]							evaluations completed during past year had been implemented within six months of completion of those evaluations.
2-2: Percent of recommendations from the studies within the past years that have been applied (measured 6 months after completion of those studies)	Outcome	MEL Annual Survey	Baseline	9 percent (N=22)	-	9 percent	9 percent of respondents said that 50 percent or more of the recommendations of all studies completed during past year had been implemented within six months of completion of those evaluations.
Sub IR 2.1: Completion of rigorous high-quality evaluations, performance and impact							
2.1-1: Number of impact evaluations designed/initiated with baseline surveys	Output	Project Monitoring System	1	-	1	1	EGRP impact evaluation has been designed.
2.1-2: Number of impact evaluations completed	Output	Project Monitoring System	-	-	-	-	

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[3] Percent of respondents who said that 50 percent or more of the recommendations of all evaluations completed during past year had been applied within six months of completion of those evaluations.

Result	Indicator Type	Verification/ Data Source	Year 1 Targets	Achievement Until Last Quarter	This Quarter Achievement (Oct to Dec)	Achievements as of This Quarter (Dec 2015)	Status Report
2.1-3: Number of performance evaluations completed	Output	Project Monitoring System	2	-	1	1	Mid-term performance evaluation of KISAN has been completed.
Sub IR 2.2: Completion of surveys, analyses, studies, and assessments meeting study needs							
2.2-1: Number of surveys, assessments and studies completed	Output	Project Monitoring System	-	-	1	1	Design of a desk study on integrated governance (DO1) completed.
IR 3: Knowledge supports planning, execution, and learning							
3-1: Percent of USAID program staff who report using the M&E/KM system for decision making (cumulative)	Outcome	MEL Annual Survey	Baseline	32 percent (N=22)	-	32 percent	According to MEL Annual Survey, 32 percent of USAID program staff have reported the use of M&E/KM system for decision making.
3-2: Percent of portfolio reviews including analysis beyond indicator frequencies (i.e., analyzing how indicators relate)	Outcome	Portfolio review reports	33.3 percent	-	-	-	Portfolio reviews for 39 indicators (11 indicators each from DO1 and DO2, 14 indicators from DO3, and 3 indicators from CDCS) were carried out in December 2015 by the mission using the APR FY 2015 submitted by the MEL project.

Result	Indicator Type	Verification/ Data Source	Year 1 Targets	Achievement Until Last Quarter	This Quarter Achievement (Oct to Dec)	Achievements as of This Quarter (Dec 2015)	Status Report
Sub IR 3.1: Decision makers access relevant and reliable data							
3.1-1: Percent of registered users who use the M&E/KM system (cumulative)	Output	Project Monitoring System	Baseline	-	-	-	The baseline will occur after the online M&E/KM system applications are designed (after roll out of AIDTracker Plus by the mission in February 2016).
Sub IR 3.2: Lessons and knowledge are documented and disseminated							
3.2-1: Proportion of approved KM assessment recommendations fully implemented	Output	Project Monitoring System	Baseline	-	-	-	The MEL project will follow-up with respective AOR/CORs after six months of the submission of the assessment recommendations to track the status of their implementation.
3.2-2: Number of IPs who have documented lesson learned as a result of the support from MEL project	Output	Project Monitoring System	0	-	-	-	

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

List of key deliverables and outputs

The following matrix illustrates the reports/deliverables completed during the first quarter of FY 2016, with a status report and comments on each.

Work Plan Component/Task Number	Description	Date Due	Completed (Y/N)	Status/ Date Completed	Notes
1.1.2	Review of project- and activity-level M&E Plans	10/15/15	Y	Completed	Six activity-level M&E plans have been reviewed and the MEL project has been reviewed, providing concrete recommendations on revising the PMP using a resilience lens.
1.1.3	Conduct assessment of IP M&E processes and capacity	10/15/15*	N	Underway	*Due date revised by COR; a draft report is due to the mission in early January 2016.
1.2.2	Develop M&E training plan for mission and IP staff.	10/15/15	Y	Completed	This task has been completed and the M&E Capacity Building Assessment and Training Plan has been approved by the mission.
1.2.3	Develop M&E training syllabus and course modules	10/15/15*	N	Underway	* Due date revised by COR; the project is developing two core course modules for use in M&E training for delivery in January 2016.
1.3.1	Assess mission GIS use	12/15/15	Y	Completed	A draft report on the use of GIS in the mission was submitted for comments from the mission as scheduled.

Work Plan Component/Task Number	Description	Date Due	Completed (Y/N)	Status/ Date Completed	Notes
1.3.4	Annual Performance Monitoring and Data Quality Report	12/15/15	Y	Completed	This task was completed and the report has been approved by the mission.
2.1	Mid-term performance evaluation of the KISAN project	N/A	Y	Completed	This unscheduled task was completed in response to a request from the COR.
2.1.1	Initiation of EGRP impact evaluation	5/15/15*	Y	Completed	*Initiation of the baseline survey for this impact evaluation was deferred by the COR until February 2016 following the earthquake in April 2015
2.1.2	Initiation of CRP impact evaluation	First project year	N	Tentatively Cancelled	The DO2 team has informed the MEL project that an impact evaluation is no longer planned; a contract amendment has been requested from the COR.
2.1.3	Initiation of IGP impact evaluation	First project year	N	Potential revision from IE to research studies	Vanderbilt University initiated a desk review of potential research studies for the DO1 team, for presentation to the mission in January 2016; a contract amendment has been requested from the COR.
2.1.4	Mid-term performance evaluation of the H4L core project	First project year	N	Underway	Scheduled in the project work plan for initiation during QI FY 2016, the evaluation was postponed until QII FY 2016 at the COR's request.

Work Plan Component/Task Number	Description	Date Due	Completed (Y/N)	Status/ Date Completed	Notes
3.1.1	Assess mission's KM tools & practices	11/15/15	Y	Completed	A draft report on the assessment of mission's KM tools and practices was submitted for comments from the mission as scheduled.
N/A	Annual Report	10/30/15	Y	Completed	This activity has been completed as scheduled.

Results achieved by the MEL project within each component, by task and sub-task, during the reporting period, are presented in detail below. Project activities planned in the next quarter are presented in a subsequent section.

Component 1: Support greater rigor and coherence in USAID/Nepal's M&E efforts

Task 1.1: PMP and M&E plan reviews

Subtask 1.1.1: Conduct PMP review. This subtask has been completed. Work on revisions to the PMP to incorporate a resilience lens has been incorporated into the ongoing tasks and responsibilities of the KM Advisor (Component 3).

Subtask 1.1.2: Conduct review of project- and activity-level M&E plans. Under the leadership of the responsible AOR, the MEL technical team reviewed the M&E plan of Baliyo Ghar project in this quarter. Altogether, six activity-level M&E plans were reviewed as of this reporting period: EGRP, Sajhedari Bikas, KISAN, H4L, Suaahara and Baliyo Ghar projects.

Subtask 1.1.3: Conduct assessment of IP M&E processes and capacity. The MEL technical team developed a draft of the report, Assessment of Monitoring and Evaluation Processes and Capacity of Implementing Partners of USAID Nepal, scheduled for transmission to the mission in early January 2016. The methodology employed a number of tools to assess the M&E processes and capacity, including a self-assessment of IP staff M&E skills, administered through an online survey; review of six activity-level M&E plans identified by the COR; site visits for in-depth interviews with staff of five IPs selected by the COR (Save the Children-Suaahara, World Wildlife Foundation - Hariyo Ban, Winrock International - KISAN, Research Triangle Initiative - H4L, and National Society for Earthquake Technology - Baliyo Ghar); analysis of the annual performance data and annual reports of 19 IPs shared by the Program Office; and discussions with the Program Office and DO teams. The report is scheduled for delivery in early January 2016.

Subtask 1.1.4: Provide ongoing support to review of IP M&E plans. The purpose of this subtask is to provide ongoing support to the mission's IPs in preparation or revision of their M&E plans, under the direction of their AOR/CORs. The MEL technical team prepared an M&E plan preparation manual and review checklist for the convenience of mission and IP staff, which will be annexed to the draft report being completed under subtask 1.1.3.

Task 1.2: M&E capacity building

Subtask 1.2.1: Assess USAID and IP M&E competencies. This assessment has been completed. During the reporting period, the M&E Capacity Building Assessment and Training Plan, incorporating the mission's comments and suggestions, was submitted in final form to the COR.

Subtask 1.2.2: Develop M&E training plan for mission and IP staff. This subtask has been completed. The M&E Capacity Building Assessment and Training Plan has been approved by the mission.

Subtask 1.2.3: Develop M&E training syllabus and course modules. The delivery of course materials for two M&E course modules to be offered during the project year was postponed by the COR until the second quarter of FY 2016, in tandem with the postponement of subtask 1.2.4.

Sub-task 1.2.4: Conduct M&E training for USAID and IP staff. Initiation of this subtask, scheduled to begin with a two-day M&E course module to be held in December 2016, was postponed by the COR until the second quarter of FY 2016 for reasons of scheduling convenience for mission staff.

Task 1.3: Technical support

Subtask 1.3.1: Assess mission Geographic Information System (GIS) use. An international consultant assessed the potential for developing GIS as a tool to enhance knowledge management and learning in the mission and presented salient assessment findings to concerned mission staff. The MEL project submitted the draft GIS assessment report to the mission for review and comment, as scheduled.

Subtask 1.3.2: Support USAID staff in the conduct of DQAs. The MEL technical team designed a tool for DQAs for indicators reported by the mission's IPs and implemented this with the Hariyo Ban project of WWF, one of the mission's selected IPs, during the reporting period. Three selected performance indicators were assessed.

Subtask 1.3.3: Support mission's migration to AIDTracker Plus. Action on this sub task was postponed by USAID until QII FY2016.

Subtask 1.3.4: Assist USAID in preparation of annual performance report. The MEL project submitted an annual performance data analysis report during the period under review to help USAID/Nepal better understand data that Partners had reported for FY 2015, with the objective of helping Mission personnel to prepare for portfolio reviews, the annual Performance Plan and Report, and annual PMP updates. The report analyzed and presented information on performance indicator baselines, targets, and achievements derived from activity-level annual reports and data from 19 IPs shared by the Program Office for the MEL project to review. The report noted trends in the data, for both output and outcome indicators; assessed the utility of baseline information; and determined whether targets had been met, both in the aggregate and by indicator, for each DO team.

Subtask 1.3.5: Facilitate workshops with each DO team to discuss performance management results. The MEL project facilitated half-day workshops with each DO

team to discuss performance management results, including what was achieved, how well targets were set, possible explanations for over- or under-achievement, the status of assumptions and game-changers, and findings/progress on the mission learning agenda.

Component 2: Design and conduct analyses, evaluations, surveys, studies, and assessments

Task 2.1: Performance and impact evaluations

The MEL project carried out a mid-term performance evaluation of USAID/Nepal's KISAN project. An evaluation team comprised of national and international consultants carried out the evaluation in 13 village development committees within six program districts. It followed a mixed methodology of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews among a wide array of stakeholders ranging from the farmer groups, to value chain actors, to government and program officials. The evaluation team presented the findings and conclusions of the evaluation to both the mission and the senior IP staff in different sessions, the purpose of which was to capture their early observations and inputs in the evaluation findings. The evaluation team drafted a report which was submitted to the mission for review and comment during the reporting period.

Subtask 2.1.1: Initiate EGRP impact evaluation. Following several rounds of discussions with various stakeholders, it was determined that data collection for the impact evaluation would be integrated into the baseline, midline, and endline surveys to be conducted by the EGRP, with appropriate controls exerted over selection of control and treatment groups. It was agreed that the MEL team will oversee the impact evaluation survey team for purposes of quality control and be responsible for impact evaluation data analysis. Subsequent meetings were devoted to articulation of the evaluation questions, methods to address them, and data limitations pertaining to each. Under the leadership of a senior international consultant and a senior Nepalese demographer, the MEL technical team reviewed Early Grade Reading Assessment and Education Management Efficiency Study tools forwarded by the EGRP team and identified potential approaches—derived from both impact and performance evaluation methodologies—to address questions of interest to the mission's education team.

Subtask 2.1.2: Initiate Community Resilience Program (CRP) impact evaluation. The DO2 team has indicated orally to the MEL project and the COR, that the CRP impact evaluation will not be a deliverable under the MEL contract. The project is awaiting written notice from the COR—followed by a contract amendment—to this effect, and that some other studies or assessments may replace this deliverable.

Subtask 2.1.3: Initiate Integrated Governance Project (IGP) impact evaluation. Vanderbilt University, a MEL project partner, was selected to conduct a desk review and to design research studies to assess the relationship between governance and economic development in Nepal. An understanding was reached between the concerned parties to initiate the desk review in December 2015 and present findings to the DO1 team in January 2016. The objective of Phase 1 of the research study design

is to assemble and summarize data and studies that have provided concrete evidence on integrated governance activities and define opportunities for additional research to support investigation of key questions of interest to USAID Nepal's DO1 team. The MEL project is awaiting written notice from the COR—followed by a contract amendment—to the effect that the IGP impact evaluation will not be a deliverable under the MEL contract, and that other studies or assessments may replace this deliverable.

Subtask 2.1.4: Conduct H4L mid-term performance evaluation. This evaluation was scheduled in the MEL project's work plan for initiation during the first quarter of FY 2016 but was postponed at the request of the COR until the second quarter. The MEL technical team provided support to further refine the evaluation questions for the revised scope of work and assembled an evaluation team for commencement of the evaluation in January 2016.

Task 2.2: Surveys, studies, and sector assessments

At the request of the DO3 education team and the COR, the MEL technical team engaged in discussion of the project Zero Tolerance on Gender-based Violence in Schools in Nepal, to be implemented by USAID in collaboration with UNICEF and Restless Development, to clarify the possible technical support required from the MEL project. The MEL technical team provided its technical advice on some of the evaluation questions raised by Restless Development.

At the request of the DO1 team, the MEL team provided ongoing support for the Inclusive Democracy and Governance Survey to be implemented by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, together with their Nepali counterpart Solutions Consultant. The MEL technical team provided oversight during the training for the enumerators and supervisors and participated in the field work observation together with the DO1 staff. Based on the field observation, the MEL team provided comments to the mission that included the action steps and corrective measures that could be undertaken immediately and through longer-term actions.

The mission economist and the COR requested that the MEL project develop a statement of work for an economic study of the impact of the Indian blockade on the Nepalese economy for discussion in January 2016.

Component 3: Support improved knowledge management within the Mission

Task 3.1: Knowledge management activities

At the COR's request, the MEL technical team hosted and facilitated workshops on resilience measurement for mission and IP staff during the final quarter of FY 2015. In a follow-up to those workshops in October 2015, the KM advisor gave a presentation to the mission on preliminary findings and recommendations and submitted a discussion draft on USAID/Nepal PMP resilience indices.

Subtask 3.1.1: Assess mission's KM tools and practices. The KM advisor presented and discussed with the mission's Integrated Monitoring & Evaluation Team (IMET) the preliminary findings, conclusions, and recommendations of a KM assessment dealing with information technologies and organizational learning. The draft KM assessment report was submitted for review and comment by the mission as scheduled during the reporting period. The KM advisor also supervised the completion of the related GIS assessment (subtask 1.3.1) during the period under review.

Subtask 3.1.2: Prepare and submit for approval draft work plan to implement assessment recommendations. No actions were planned under this subtask during the quarter. It is scheduled for completion after the KM assessment report is approved by the mission.

Subtask 3.1.3: Prepare and submit for approval training plan, syllabus, trainer's manual and course references for training needed to carry out work plan. No actions were planned under this subtask during the quarter. It is scheduled for completion after the KM assessment report is approved by the mission.

Sub-task 3.1.4: Implement KM work plan and training plan. No actions were planned under this subtask during the quarter. Preparation of the KM training plan will commence following the approval of the KM assessment report by the mission.

Subtask 3.1.5: Prepare annual KM report. No actions were planned under this subtask during the quarter since this activity is subject to the approval of the KM assessment report.

Subtask 3.1.6: Facilitate learning summits. No actions were planned under this subtask during the quarter.

Subtask 3.1.7: Conduct annual KM survey. No actions were planned under this subtask during the quarter.

Subtask 3.1.8: Facilitate a Resilience Measurement Workshop. Pending addition to the work plan.

Subtask 3.1.9: Help strengthen the discussion of resilience measurement in the mission PMP (pending addition to the work plan). As a follow-up to the Resilience Measurement Workshop, on October 8 the MEL project's KM Advisor presented findings and recommendations from the workshop to the mission. This meeting was well attended by IMET and DO team members. A discussion draft on USAID/Nepal PMP resilience indices was submitted on October 9.

COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

Several introductory and follow-up meetings were held between the MEL technical staff team and USAID/Nepal staff, including the COR, DO team leaders, and the Program Office Director. The MEL team worked in close coordination with the responsible AOR/CORs of the Program Office to seek inputs on a number of activities that it implemented during the reporting period, including:

- Reviewing IPs' activity M&E plans;
- Providing technical support to IPs to strengthen their M&E capacities;
- Implementing online self-assessments to determine potential gaps in the M&E skills and competencies of both mission and IP staff;
- Undertaking field visits for DQAs;
- Conducting visits to selected IPs' offices for conducting the assessment of their M&E processes and competencies;
- Carrying out peer reviews of evaluation, assessment, and other technical scopes of work for consultants and evaluation teams, in collaboration with DO teams, and then developing work orders for their implementation;
- Providing presentations for discussion with the Program Office and DO teams on the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of various assessments for which the MEL project is responsible;
- Orienting consultants and evaluation teams on their assignments in preparation for in-briefs, development of work plans, and preparation of presentations to USAID; and
- Providing technical reviews for the purpose of quality control of various reports and presentations prepared by consultants and evaluation teams.

Project staff have also been actively coordinating and collaborating with senior IP staff to establish effective mechanisms for coordinated M&E plan reviews, M&E process reviews and DQAs, the KM assessment, and the GIS assessment.

ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

The MEL project has conducted a variety of analyses based on data collected for the assessments and evaluations it has performed during the first quarter of FY 2016, including the following two reports approved in final form by the mission:

Assessment of Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Building Needs with Recommended Training Plan for USAID and Implementing Partners. This assessment found relatively low levels of professional confidence, on the part of both mission and IP staff, in M&E skills central to the performance of their jobs and recommended a multi-tiered M&E training plan to address those gaps. The training plan, to be rolled out by the MEL project beginning in the second quarter of FY 2016, comprises core face-to-face courses, online experiential learning, access to skilled M&E coaches, and on-the-job training for both USAID and IP staff.

Annual Performance Data Analysis Report — FY 2015. This report identified wide variation in the percentage differences of actual versus targeted performance on activity-level indicators reported by the mission's IPs, pointing toward the conclusion that the unexpectedly robust performance of indicators against targets in FY 2015 was due in many cases to weak baselines and overly modest target setting rather than to actual activity achievements. One of the recommendations forthcoming from discussions with the Program Office and DO teams was that the MEL project may be tasked in coming quarters with performing baseline studies and surveys for some new USAID projects.

CHALLENGES AND LOOKING AHEAD

On April 25, 2015, Nepal experienced a major and deadly earthquake registering 7.9 on the Richter scale, causing 9,061 fatalities and 23,447 injuries. This was followed by months of earthquakes and aftershocks, of which nearly 100 have registered 4.0 or higher on the Richter scale. The devastation caused by these earthquakes and aftershocks was further aggravated by unrest in the Terai relating to approval of Nepal's constitution, and then a fuel crisis caused by an informal blockade imposed by India.

These events caused a severe restriction in the mobility of mission personnel, thereby impeding the ability of MEL staff and consultants to conduct field work under the supervision of USAID staff. The border towns in particular are still not advisable for travel for security reasons, and MEL project visits to those areas have been kept on hold as advised by the COR. The fuel crisis has abated somewhat as black markets have sprung up, but price increases have been substantial—not just for fuel but also for basic commodities that require transport, affecting the well-being of low-income Nepali citizens in particular. To date, there is no resolution to the fuel crisis in sight, and concerns remain that conditions could worsen if conflict increases due to the stalemate.

PLAN FOR THE NEXT QUARTER (JANUARY TO MARCH 2016)

The plan under various components for the upcoming quarter is as follows:

Component 1: Support greater rigor and coherence in USAID/Nepal's M&E efforts

- *Subtask 1.1.1: Conduct PMP review.* This subtask has been completed.

- *Subtask 1.1.2: Conduct review of project and activity-level M&E plans.* The MEL technical team will continue to contribute to the review of activity-level M&E plans as requested by the COR.

- *Subtask 1.1.3: Conduct assessment of IP M&E processes and capacity.* In January 2016, the MEL technical team will finalize the draft IP assessment and then present findings, conclusions, and recommendations to IP staff for discussion. The technical team will then finalize the IP assessment, incorporating comments received from the mission, and submit it in final form to the mission.

- *Subtask 1.1.4: Provide ongoing support to review of IP M&E plans.* The MEL technical team will continue provide support to the review of IP M&E plans as requested by the COR.

- *Subtask 1.2.1: Assess USAID and IP M&E competencies.* This subtask has been completed. In January 2016, the MEL project will present the findings and conclusions of both assessments, for discussion, in separate meetings with both USAID and IP staff.

- *Subtask 1.2.2: Develop M&E training plan for mission and IP staff.* This subtask has been completed. In January 2016, the MEL project will present the recommended M&E training plan for discussion to separate meetings with both mission and IP staff (see subtask 1.2.1).

- *Subtask 1.2.3: Develop M&E training syllabus and course modules.* Delivery of course materials for the first two M&E modules to be offered under the approved training plan will be delivered in January 2016, each including a syllabus, a participants' manual, and course references.

- *Subtask 1.2.4: Conduct M&E training for USAID and IP staff.* The first M&E course module will be delivered in February 2016. It will feature an experienced expatriate trainer, with participation by USAID staff and selected IP staff—in particular the MEL technical team, who will serve as trainers in the roll out of the courses to IPs and as mentors for the online courses to be offered in both English and Nepali.

- ***Subtask 1.3.1: Assess mission GIS use.*** The MEL project has submitted a draft report on the Assessment of the use of GIS by USAID/Nepal and its partners to the mission. The MEL project will finalize the GIS assessment report after receiving comments from the mission on the draft report.

- ***Subtask 1.3.2: Support USAID staff in the conduct of DQAs.*** The MEL technical team will continue to provide technical support to conduct DQAs at the IP level upon request of the COR, under the leadership of the respective AOR/CORs of each activity.

- ***Subtask 1.3.3: Support mission's integration into AIDTracker Plus.*** At least one member of the MEL technical staff will attend AIDTracker Plus training to be held in Bangkok in February 2016, enabling the project to support the mission in rolling out the training to IPs during FY 2016.

- ***Subtask 1.3.4: Assist USAID in preparation of annual performance report.*** This subtask has been completed in QI FY 2016, and the report has been approved by the mission. In January 2016, the MEL project will include discussion of the report's findings and conclusions in a series of presentations to IP staff, by DO (see subtask 1.1.3).

- ***Subtask 1.3.5: Facilitate workshops with each DO team to discuss performance management results:*** This subtask has been completed in QI FY 2016.

Component 2: Design and conduct analyses, evaluations, surveys, studies, and assessments

- ***Task 2.1: Performance and impact evaluations.*** With the support of the evaluation team members, the MEL technical team will finalize the mid-term performance evaluation report of the KISAN project.

- ***Sub-task 2.1.1: Initiate EGRP impact evaluation:*** The MEL technical team will develop a work order for the EGRP evaluation team to both oversee the baseline survey to be undertaken by EGRP from an impact evaluation perspective and conduct a baseline study for evaluation of performance evaluation questions of interest to the education team.

- ***Sub-task 2.1.2: Initiate CRP impact evaluation*** The MEL project is awaiting written notice from the COR to the effect that the CRP impact evaluation will not be a deliverable under the MEL contract, as has been indicated orally by the DO2 team, and that some other studies or assessments may replace this deliverable. The MEL project will request a contract amendment to delete the impact evaluation from the MEL contract.

- ***Sub-task 2.1.3: Initiate IGP impact evaluation.*** A senior consultant from Vanderbilt University will arrive in Nepal in January 2016 to make a presentation to the mission regarding the findings of the desk assessment of research study options for the DO1 team. The consultant will also deliver a brown bag session on the findings of the desk study to a wider audience within the mission. The MEL project will request a contract amendment to delete the impact evaluation from the MEL contract.

- ***Sub-task 2.1.4: Conduct H4L mid-term evaluation.*** The MEL project will submit a work order outlining the methodology, team members, and cost to conduct the mid-term performance evaluation of the H4L core project. The H4L evaluation is scheduled to commence in January 2016.

- ***Task 2.2: Surveys, studies, and sector assessments:*** At the request of the mission's economist and the COR, the MEL technical team will develop a statement of work to initiate an economic study of the impact of the informal Indian blockade on the Nepalese economy. The team will continue providing technical support and assistance to the mission in carrying out any new studies, assessments, and research, as requested by the COR.

Component 3: Support improved knowledge management within the mission

- ***Sub-task 3.1.1: Assess mission's KM tools and practices.*** The MEL team will finalize the KM report upon receipt of comments from the mission.

- ***Sub-task 3.1.2: Prepare and submit for approval draft work plan to implement assessment recommendations.*** The draft work plan will be submitted within 30 days of approval of the KM assessment.

- ***Sub-task 3.1.3: Prepare and submit for approval training plan, syllabus, trainer's manual, and course references for training needed to carry out work plan.*** Within 60 days of approval of the KM work plan, the MEL project will provide a training plan and syllabus for KM training activities. The project will then develop a trainer's manual and course materials for training sessions on an iterative basis, according to the agreed training schedule. The manual and course materials for each session will be submitted for mission review and approval at least one week prior to each session.

- ***Sub-task 3.1.4: Implement KM work plan and training plan.*** Implementation of the KM work plan and training plan will commence following its approval by the COR.

- ***Sub-task 3.1.5: Prepare annual KM and organizational learning report.*** During QII FY 2016, the KM advisor will be engaged in preparing the first annual KM and organizational learning report for delivery as scheduled in April 2016. The report will

draw upon the annual KM and organizational learning survey (subtask 3.1.7) and consultations with mission and IP staff.

- ***Sub-task 3.1.6: Facilitate learning summits***. Also during QII FY 2016, the KM advisor will work with the mission to plan the learning summit scheduled for April 2016. The scope of MEL's assistance will be determined in consultation with the COR.

- ***Sub-task 3.1.7: Conduct annual KM and organizational learning survey.*** The three indicators for this task specified in the MEL project Request for Proposals were included in the online self-assessment survey conducted for mission staff by the MEL project in August and September 2015 and summarized in the M&E Capacity Building Assessment and Training Plan (January 2016). In February 2016, a supplementary survey will be designed, and indicators will be revised and expanded in consultation with the mission's IMET, to measure improvements related to AIDTracker Plus, the mission's document management, and organizational learning for both mission and IP staff.